

May 2021
Re: Character letter for Romel C. Murphy

To whom this may concern:

My name is Trelinda Clark and I am Romel Murphy's wife.

To know Romel is to know a great man... A man of unmatched drive and determination...A man of unlimited possibilities...A man of honor... A man that once carried the pain and sorrow from being exposed to detrimental experiences of abandonment and gambling as an young child... A man that perseveres and overcomes... Although Romel has made some significant mistakes during his young life, he has many more accomplishments that he continues to build upon - Most notable are his roles as a husband, father and community leader.

Romel, the Husband...

I have known Romel for more than 20 years. He and I met in our hometown of St. Louis, Missouri during his freshman year of college and my high school senior year. Although, we went to college in different states, we remained good friends during our early college days. Over the years, our lives began to move in different directions and we fell out of touch for some time. He and I reconnected about 10 years ago – We married almost 7 years ago and now share a full and happy life together with our two young kids.

Like most marriages, we have experienced our fair share of highs and lows. He has had to figure out what it means to be a good husband as I have had to grow into my role as his wife. We have learned together (and continue to learn) what it means to create a solid partnership and build a foundation and legacy for our family. It is not a perfect union, but we work extremely hard every day to ensure we have a healthy, loving relationship. We represent growth together - Romel has not only been more than willing to figure out ways to better himself by participating in marriage counseling and individual therapy - but also to putting what he has learned into actionable practice. I am blessed to be on this life journey with someone that is maturing in his wisdom and is such a loving, caring, giving, kind-hearted man.

Romel the Father...

By far, Romel's most important role right now is being a father to our two kids: Our son, Clark who is 6 years old and our daughter, Rome who is 3 years old. Romel is an active father - We have a true parenting partnership and share in the responsibilities for our kids. Romel makes sure the kids get to and from school (when not remote learning) and extracurricular practices and helps with homework. He teaches our kids basic skills like swimming, riding a bike and practices form and technique for almost every sport I can think of. He does bath time, story time, and prayers with them nightly. He loves our kids whole heartedly, disciplines our kids and instills life values into them daily. Romel prides himself on being the best dad, motivated by the lack of his dad's presence. He recently received high praise and recognition voted by the mothers of Jack and Jill of America Incorporated (An African American mother member organization focused on creating youth programming with the intent of developing well rounded servant leaders of tomorrow).

Our kids have great admiration for their father – he is their real life superhero. Romel is a constant, daily factor in the development and happiness of our kids.

Romel the Community Leader...

Not many people can say they are walking in their purpose *and* doing the work they are passionate about – Romel is one of the few people that is fortunate enough to be able to say that. Last year, during the pandemic and at the height of the social unrest, Equality Should Be Normal (ESBN) was birthed. I am amazed at what Romel has been able to accomplish in such a short time with the support of his board and established partnerships. Every single day, Romel serves an underrepresented community in Chicago by providing a variety of resources such as free mental health therapy, pantry of food and other necessities, daily hot meals, tutoring, technology learning, youth mentoring and a host of other opportunities...I believe in the work that he is doing, he is most proud of the youth mentoring program which allows him to personally sew into unexposed kids and young adults by providing exposure, opportunity and guidance through real life experiences on how to avoid some of the pitfalls that he has encountered.

Romel is remorseful for the mistakes of his past that were catapulted by his gambling addiction – which he has worked extremely hard to overcome through addiction programs, counseling and just living a more purposeful life. It would be a significant loss for me, our kids (more importantly) and our community to not allow Romel to continue his life's work as a loving husband, father, and community leader.

Thank you for reading my letter – My family and I are grateful for your attention,
consideration and mercy.

Regards,

Trelinda Clark

My name is Vernod Heard the father of Romel Murphy. First I want to take this time to say how proud I am of the man Romel is today. He is a leader in the community and a great father. My son being a great father means the most to me because I was not a great father. I was in and out of my sons life since he was born and when I was around it consisted of me taking him to card houses and the racetracks. This is because I am a gambler and I introduced that life to my kid. Today I still am a gambler and know that even though my son is a man I fed him the gambling addiction which harmed his life. I am proud that he got help and was able to beat the addiction and is now being a better father than I ever was and a helper in Chicago. I ask that the judge not put my son in prison he is remorseful for his actions, has accepted responsibility from day one and will work everyday to repay those that lost money at the hands of a terrible addiction if he is not in jail. As I battle cancer I do not want my last years to be with my son in prison. Thank you

From: Jamal Pollard c/o2021

6346 S King Dr. Apt 1A

Chicago, IL 60637

I met Mr. Romel Murphy last summer and since then he has turned into a real big brother. I don't know where I would be without him. Since they day I met him he has done nothing but help me prepare for life, taught me from the mistakes he has made in life and helped me achieve my goals from getting me help in school to preparing a better future for my family. There are not a lot of people in the world like him or people who do what he does. He wakes up and wants to help others no matter what. He doesn't do anything for the money or attention everything comes from the heart and everyone around him knows that. He is out every day Monday - Friday passing out food and helping the community when he doesn't have to. Meeting him was life changing for me and my neighborhood because he kept me on track and now I will be graduating this year and I will be heading on to college next. I have learned so much from him since the time we have known each other and he wants nothing but the best for everyone around him. He is the type of person that would give someone the shirt of his back. He took a kid who was struggling and showed me life through a different set of eyes and showed me things that I probably would have never seen without him. Not only did he show me things he also has help me put myself in the position where these things become normal. Just to sum things up Mr. Romel is a great person all around. I am glad I met him at the time I did. Being around him almost every day has done nothing but changed my life for the better and I am highly appreciative. As he continues to be a positive male figure to my community of Parkway Gardens considered the most dangerous project in Chicago I don't know where a lot of us would be without him.

FROM: Debra Simmon
TO: Whom It May Concern
SUBJECT: Character Letter – Romel Murphy

My name is Debra Simmon a retired Air Force Master Sergeant, and I am writing on behalf of my brother Romel Murphy. After the loss of our mother, he found it very difficult to deal with her absent and did not grieve. Being a student in college and unable to grieve properly, he made mistakes.

Since this crime Romel has had tremendous amount of reflection and growth on his part. Attending counseling to deal with his mother's loss, gambling addiction and the pain he caused upon others has now moved him into the right direction. First - he has now found purpose in life, being the best honest man, he can be and how he can make his wrongs into rights. Secondly, he has demonstrated the love he has for his two small children who are his heartbeat. Clark and Rome adore their father. Romel is showing his children how it's important to be respectful to all humankind. He is demonstrating what a father looks like in the household, something he never experienced growing up as a child or a man still to this day. His family truly depends on him, needs him and he needs them too. He has started an outreach program for youth who may choose the wrong path. With his eagerness to change the path of young men and women, he has decided to show them a better way with offering the city of Chicago life coaching, mental health counseling, college recruitment, effective social skills, mentorship and much more. What I admire the most about my brother is he takes his two young children to the Barbra Murphy Research Center (named after his mother) so they can also help and be a blessing to others.

Reducing the crime in our society is what the city of Chicago needs, a leader by his own mistakes making a difference in helping our youth avoid the destructive streets and show them a better way – greatness!

Romel is what we need, putting others over self to protect society and our young youth. Allow him to continue his propose in life, doing good for all.

Sincerely,

Debra Simmon

Dsimmon17@yahoo.com

Gabrielle Herndon
2605 S. Indiana Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60616
Cell: 312.561.0285

May 10, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter as a character reference on behalf of Romel Murphy. I met Romel about a year ago through his community organization, Equality Should Be Normal (ESBN), where I serve as a volunteer. From our first meeting I knew that we would be lifelong friends and work together tirelessly to bring about a change in our community.

Romel established the Barbara Murphy Community Resource Center, in honor of his late mother, in a divested community, that because of its limited resources, has a large number of displaced people who have come to rely on the daily meals and inspirational messages that Romel so willingly shares with them.

During the time I have known Romel I have witnessed him give his time, talents and resources to our community through Juneteenth celebrations, food drives, holiday toy giveaways and his weekly service to the community with his food pantry.

Romel not only serves our community in many capacities, but he is an outstanding father of two amazing young people. As an educator, I take notice of parents, especially fathers that take the time to nurture their children by spending quality time with them. He often has his children at the center with him where he includes them in the work he is doing and at the same time gives them the hands on attention they need to be successful in school.

Romel is an integral member of our community whose presence has been felt tremendously in the short time he has been here. He is genuine, dependable, generous and dedicated to his mission. He serves as a role model to anyone that has the pleasure of interacting with him. He motivates me to be better and to do better!!!

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Ms. G. Herndon

Ms. Gabrielle Herndon

May 10th, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I have worked closely with Romel Murphy for almost a year now as part of his organization Equality Should Be Normal (ESBN). I met Romel in June 2020 and soon after began volunteering with ESBN; I currently serve as the Volunteer Board Committee Chair of ESBN.

Since its inception, ESBN—spearheaded by Romel—has done tremendous work for the community in the South Side of Chicago. Romel has personally organized numerous events ranging from free covid testing, food drives, toy drives, community celebrations, and more. Where he sees a need in the community, he works to provide as many resources as possible. One of his greatest achievements was opening the ESBN Community Resource Center in the Washington Park neighborhood. Romel is at the center every day of the week, from morning to night, offering free food, clothes, toiletries, and more to all members of the community. Free hot meals are available at the center every weekday. Furthermore, Romel established partnerships with several other organizations, through which the center now offers free therapy and technology classes. The Washington Park community has come to know Romel, and they are incredibly grateful for all his work and dedication in supporting and enriching the community. Moreover, Romel has helped several high school seniors from the community apply for both colleges and scholarships, and these students are now all college-bound.

In addition, Romel has been a wonderful friend and mentor to me since we met. He is always willing to help and lend a hand; in addition to always providing support and comfort (which has meant so much especially during 2020), he also provides food, rides, and more to me and all other volunteers. He always checks in with everyone and maintains a very positive and uplifting environment. His passion and drive are inspiring, and have encouraged me to open my eyes and provide help and resources where I can. I come to the ESBN Community Center as often as I can to work together with Romel and meet community members.

In summary, Romel Murphy has been a pillar for the South Side community in Chicago. He has poured his heart into helping and serving the community in every way possible, and I am forever grateful he has given me the opportunity to help and work beside him.

Sincerely,



Elamar Hakim Moullay

Dear Lawyer

There have been a lot of people who have made an impact in my life but the one who significantly impacted my life as a person was Romale. My family and I lives in Parkway Gardens homes is a low-income apartment complex. Parkway is known as (8 block) is the most dangerous block in the city. I am a single parent and I never let my son hang out in the complex because of the on going shooting, killing, and fighting that happens often in the complex, and the community itself. The summer of 2020 is where it all began. Romale took my son and other youth to the ESBN Juneteenth Peace and Equality Rally in Washington D.C. Romale also took them on college tours and so much more. This trip definitely change my son. It was definitely an great opportunity of an life time for him. Romale months later build an community resource center for my son and other youth to have an safe place to come to. Inside this community Romale offer jobs, volunteer, work, free hair cuts, hot meals everyday, groceries essential goods, mentoring, and so much more. Romale took my son under his wings. Couldn't ask for a better person than Romale. Romale is an life saver. Romale mentor my son, the best mentor ever. Romale is an great guy and have a big heart.

820 West Lake Street
Chicago, IL 60607
michelle@bokagrp.com

May 11, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a character reference for Mr. Romel Murphy, Founder of Equality Should Be Normal.

I had the pleasure of meeting Romel through an introduction from our Chef Stephanie Izard of Girl And The Goat. We were as a company embarking on a philanthropic relationship with his newly founded organization ESBN located in my neighborhood on Chicago's Southside. He attended one of our employee meetings to share his journey about how he came to create a very much needed center and safe haven for our extremely lacking and underserved neighborhood. His passion and sincerity was undeniable and inspired all of us here at BOKA Restaurant Group to volunteer and be a part of any fundraising for this most worthy cause. His experience through the pandemic last summer and his response to it is nothing less than phenomenal.

Shortly after meeting him he asked me to become a board member and I happily accepted. I wasn't sure what to expect but I knew that Romel from the first day that I met him that he is something special.

Romel has an uncanny ability to make people feel special and we hit it off immediately. I meet hundreds of people in my career path and he has a very special gift of connecting with people in the most authentic and genuine way. He felt like family instantly and I soon brought my own family in to volunteer and he embraced us all in a way that is unexplainable. He has truly touched our hearts.

Romel's vision of creating a safe space has come to fruition. It has become a vital center for the homeless to get hot meals, essentials like warm clothing, a place where people from the neighborhood can get mental health care, young people can come to get mentoring.

access to computers, haircuts, information and encouragement to pursue a college career. Most of these young folks have been told that they are not cut out for college and he has inspired many that can be their dream too. He is truly fulfilling a huge gap that exists in our community.

What's most impressive has been his ability to get so much accomplished in less than twelve months. He has worked tirelessly and most times completely on his own to keep the Center alive and going. There are days when people just want to come in to talk and be heard. These are folks that have nowhere else to go and no one to care for them.

We are all excited as a community to see what this next year will bring with the level of excellence Romel has already been able to accomplish. ESBN has quickly become a vital staple in our community and I am so proud of Romel's daily drive and enthusiasm for equity and giving people a voice and hope. Romel is truly living a purpose driven life and continues to inspire us all!

Sincerely,

Your Name